

CHAITANYA

HIS LIFE AND TEACHINGS



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CHAITANYA.



We have in another sketch* spoken of a great reformation—at once religious and social—that spread over the whole of Hindusthan in the 15th and 16th centuries. Somewhat eclectic and humanitarian in other provinces, the movement took a deeply Vaishnavite character in Bengal and Orissa. Side by side with the gospel of love and Brotherhood, the new Vaishnavite creed of South India—of a God full of all *gunas*, of the Distinction of Soul from God, and of pure and loving worship—was established. The result was a deep national awakening which embraced within its scope all classes of the Bengali race. The doors of religion were thrown open to all—men as well as women. A great wave of religious fervour and enthusiasm spread over the whole province the effects of which are visible even to-day. The movement was not merely religious and social; it was highly literary. On the anvil of this movement was forged a rich vernacular literature which still forms a valuable treasure of the Bengali language.

* TUKARAM, "Saints of India" Series, G. A. Natesan & Co., Madras.

The hero and author of this widespread Vaishnavite movement was the great reformer and mystic, Shri Krishnā Chaitanya, (February-March, 1485 A. D. to 1533 June-July). Possessed of vast learning and a keen intellect, he preached the new religion with remarkable zeal and eloquence. Large numbers of men joined him from all classes of the population and missions were soon established in several parts of the province and even outside it. But greater than his creed and reforms was his character pure, gentle, ecstatic, full of sweetness and loving kindness. His heart flowed out in sympathy for all, for the poor and the lowly as well as for the scholar and the prince. He lived with them all, taught them, served them and consoled them. Still, across the centuries, the story of his life and character—so full of purity, self-sacrifice and a deep love of humanity—moves our admiration. Never, since Buddha's death, had any saint more gentle and sweet, more humane, trodden the soil of India.

Chaitanya's life falls into three periods (i) the first twenty-four years from his birth to the time of his entering the monastic order ; (ii) the six years of pilgrimage to South and North India ;

(iii)-the last eighteen years which were spent in residence at Puri.

CHAITANYA'S BIRTH AND PARENTAGE.

Jagannath Misra, surnamed Purandhar, a Brahmin of the Vaidik sub-caste, had emigrated from his ancestral home in Sylhet and settled at Navadwip, a town in the district of Nadia in Bengal, in order to live on the bank of the holy Ganges. His wife was Shachi, a daughter of a great scholar, by name Nilambar Chakravarthi. Nine children were born to this couple of which the first eight, all daughters, had died in infancy and the ninth, a boy, named Bishwarup, abandoned the world at the age of sixteen when pressed to marry and entered a monastery somewhere in South India. In February-March 1485 A. D. when there was a lunar eclipse at the time of full moon, another son was born to this couple. It was their tenth child. The new-born child was named Bishwambhar. But the women of the village, seeing that his mother had lost so many children before him, gave him the disparaging name of *Nimai* ('short-lived') in order to propitiate the evil spirits. His marvellous beauty, however, earned him the name of *Gaur* or *Gaur-anga* ("Fair-complexioned"). The day on which

Bishwambhar was born being the day of lunar eclipse, Hari's name was chanted all over the village and this was taken as a pious omen that Bishwambhar would prove a teacher of Vishnu-faith and *Bhakthi*.

HIS EDUCATION.

Navadwip was famous in mediæval Bengal for its *tols* or schools of Sanskrit learning. Especially Sanskrit Grammar and Logic were highly developed and studied there. The fame of its scholars had spread all over the province and students came from several parts to study under them. Bishwambhar early joined one of these *tols* and he showed great keenness and precocity of intellect in mastering all branches of Sanskrit learning, especially Grammar and Logic. "But, if we may believe the biographers of Chaitanya (the name by which Bishwambhar was initiated as a monk later on and which we have anticipated in this sketch) the atmosphere of the town was sceptical and unspiritual. There was a lack of true religious fervour and sincere devotion. Proud of their intellectuality, proud of the vast wealth they acquired by gifts from rich Hindus, the local *Pundits* despised *Bhakthi* or devotion as weak and vulgar, and engaged in idle ceremonies or idler amusements.

Vedantism formed the topic of conversation of the cultured few ; wine and goat's meat were taken kindly by the majority of the people and such *shakta* ceremonies as provided them were performed with zeal and enthusiasm."* Chaitanya too grew up as one of them, proud of his learning and intellectual attainments.

HIS MARRIAGE.

His father died while he was still a student. He then married Lakshmi, the daughter of a Ballab Acharya, with whom he seems to have fallen in love at first sight. He thus became a householder and, when his studies were over, he began to take pupils like the other Brahmins of his town. As a pundit, he surpassed the other scholars of the place and it is said that he once even defeated in argument some renowned scholar of another province who was travelling all over India holding disputations. Vivid descriptions are left to us in his biographies of this famous encounter—how all the enthusiastic scholars of the town, young as well as old, put forward this Chaitanya as their candidate and how the young scholar, after a great display of his logic

* Krishna Das's "Life of Chaitanya" Translated by Prof. Jadunath Sarkar. Introduction.

and learning, made the itinerant disputant admit his defeat. Chaitanya then made a scholastic tour in East Bengal in which he received many gifts from admiring householders. When he returned to Navadvip, he found that his wife had died of snake-bite during his absence. After a while, he married Vishnupriya. Chaitanya was now in the very height of his worldly career—a rich and prosperous man, a proud scholar, and the admiration of his province. His prosperity and learning seem to have turned his head with pride; but the reformation of his soul was close at hand.

CHAITANYA'S "CONVERSION."

During a pilgrimage to Gaya for performing *Shraddh* to his father, he met Ishwar Puri, a Vaishnava monk of the order of Madhwacharya and a disciple of Madhav Puri or Madhavendra, a monk of the same order. This Madhavendra seems to have first introduced the new cult of Vishnu-worship and Bhakthi among the monks of Bengal and Orissa. Chaitanya took Ishwar Puri as his guru. "A complete change now came over his spirit. His intellectual pride was gone: he became a bhaktha: whatever subject he lectured on, the theme of his discourse was

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love of Krishna. Indeed he developed religious ecstasy and for some time behaved like a mad man: he laughed, wept, incessantly shouted Krishna's name, climbed up trees or raved in abstraction imagining himself to be Krishna."

MADHAV PURI, THE SOUTHERN MONK.

Before proceeding further, it behoves us to look a little at the life and story of Madhav Puri, the South Indian monk, who with his disciples seems to have first introduced Chaitanya and some of his famous contemporaries to the new Vaishnavite creed of South India. The notices of Madhav Puri that occur in the biographies of Chaitanya are quite meagre: from them, however, we have gleaned the following. He was a Krishna-bhaktha and a monk of the Madhwacharya order. Madhwacharya, it may be remembered, preached with some modifications the Vaishnavite doctrines of Ramanuja. He installed at Udipi—still the chief place of pilgrimage of his followers—a handsome image of Krishna said to have been rescued from a cargo of consecrated earth (*Gopichandan*) in a sunken ship. He also gave currency to the new scheme of Vaishnavite devotion—song, prayer and *sankirtan*. Madhav

Puri was perhaps born in Udupi, the new city of Krishna. Educated in the new creed, filled with Krishna-*bhakti*, Madhav Puri wandered to the North in quest of the classic scenes of Krishna's life, the groves of Brindaban and the waters of the Jumna. After a weary journey, he reached Brindaban and made his residence near the Govinda-Kunda. We pass over the legend of how the hungry wanderer was fed through the grace of Krishna himself. A more interesting fact is the discovery by Madhav Puri of some Krishna-image in the groves of Brindaban. The news soon spread and people came from the surrounding districts to see the new Krishna and to worship Him. The piety of some local prince or Kshatriya soon led to the erection of a temple and perhaps Madhav Puri himself became the priest thereof. So far there is nothing incredible in the story, as the influence of many another Southern monk in North India in the Middle ages resulted from similar incidents. Then the Puri seems to have wandered about to Bengal and Orissa to gather some high-class sandal and camphor for his deity but perhaps really to learn the modes of temple-worship and ritual in those parts. Madhav's wanderings extended as far as Puri, the

city of Jagannath, in Orissa. It was in this journey that he came across Advaita Acharya, a scholar of Shantipur in Bengal, "who was moved by his devotion to get himself initiated and became his disciple."

MADHAV PURI'S TEACHINGS.

From what we gather, Madhav Puri seems to have been a godly man, learned, simple in habits and thought, full of a deep and ecstatic love for Krishna. But, spite of his ecstasy and wandering life, strangely anticipating the doings of Chaitanya himself, he seems to have been a scholar well-versed in the Vaishnavite creed. He and his disciples went about teaching the same to all. It was through one of his disciples—*Ishwar Puri*—that the new creed descended to Chaitanya and Nityanand the latter of whom was converted some time earlier than Chaitanya and who became to Chaitanya "even more than what Paul was to Christ." Madhav Puri and his disciples do not stand alone in this respect. Others, too, like Ramananda of the Ramanujite order and Vallabhacharya were South Indian Missionaries. It was the seed sown by the former that blossomed into the great popular religions of Kabir and Nanak: while the latter's

sing verses apt for His passion. The Acharya raised Him to make Him dance. At the verses (of Mukunda) the Master could no longer be held back. He was all tears, tremour, thrill, sweat and broken accents now rising up, now falling down, now weeping.

THE SONG : RADHA SPEAKS.

Woe is me, dear sister, for my present state !
The love of Krishna has caught my soul and
body like a poison.

My heart burns day and night : I know no peace.
O that I could fly where Kahn is to be found !

Sweetly did Mukunda sing the above ditty which made the Masters' heart burst He was stricken down by the force of his passion and lay down breathless on the ground. The faithful grew alarmed when lo ! He sprang up with a shout overcome with ecstasy and saying "chant, chant the name of Hari." None could understand the strong tides of His emotion.

These ecstatic doings and the new religion behind them should have come with a surprise upon the formal and pedantic world that surrounded Chaitanya. Nothing could have been more contrary to the secret tantric rites and the nihilistic Vedantism of the contemporary pundits and scholars. They therefore rose in opposition and even treated Chaitanya and his companions with open hatred.

CHAITANYA AND THE KAZI.

It was now that that remarkable incident took place which throws wonderful light on the

practical spirit and knowledge of human nature on the part of Chaitanya. The novelty of his doings seems to have attracted the notice of the local Mahomedan officer, the Kazi. Perhaps induced by the scholars and pundits of the town who openly opposed Chaitanya, the Kazi caused the musical instruments in the house of one of Chaitanya's friends to be broken, and strictly prohibited the holding of singing and dancing parties. Chaitanya determined to set at defiance the order of the Governor and bring him to reason. He organised three large *sankirtan* parties and, at the head of one of them, marched to the very door of the Kazi's house. The gate had been shut; but in response to Chaitanya's message, the Kazi came out and soon he and Chaitanya became staunch friends. Chaitanya took the Kazi to task for his un-Mahomedan conduct in not properly receiving a guest at his door. The Kazi, thus put to shame, was obliged to apologise. The result was a most hearty reconciliation between the parties. After thus securing the friendship of the Mahomedan Governor, Chaitanya and his friends engaged in their *sankirtans*, *bhajans*, and nightly vigils in peace.

CHAITANYA BECOMES A MONK.

But spite of the friendship of the governor, the learned and the orthodox still maintained their attitude of hatred and opposition towards Chaitanya. He was, however, not in the least shaken by the opposition of the people, but was only moved to grief at their scepticism and want of faith. He could make very few converts among them. Only one way suggested itself to him. He decided to take the robes of a sanyasin. Chaitanya argued thus: "As I must deliver all these proud scholars and orthodox house-holders I have to take to an ascetic life. They will surely *bow* to me when they see me as a hermit and thus their hearts will be purified and filled with *bhakti*. There is no other means of securing their salvation." So at the age of 24 (1509 A.D.), he got himself initiated, under one Keshav Bharati, as a *sanyasi* under the name of *Krishna-Chaitanya*—usually shortened into Chaitanya, a name which we have already anticipated in this sketch. His mother, the tender-hearted Sachi, who had already been filled with woe at the loss of Chaitanya's elder brother and who had long urged him not to desert her as the elder had done, was now heart-broken at the initiation of Chaitanya. But-

Chaitanya, who bore deep love and reverence for his mother to the end of his life, consoled her in every possible way and obeyed her wishes in many points in his after years as lovingly as he had done before renouncing the life of the house-holder. ' ,

It has sometimes been said that the real motive, that made Chaitanya take the robes of a monk, was a desire for personal glory and also an unworthy desire to spite the proud scholars of his town. But to those who have studied at all deeply the life and character of Chaitanya, the utter falsehood of this suggestion will be apparent. His wanderings and pilgrimages, his strict avoidance of all publicity and display—above all, his life of simplicity and devotion and sweet companionship with all, the high and the lowly alike—are essentially inconsistent with the existence of such motives. On the other hand, the monkhood gave but full scope to a heart already full of missionary zeal and reforming enthusiasm. Modern Indian history cannot furnish a more remarkable example of religious missionary and preacher. All his great learning and intellect, Chaitanya bent with one supreme effort to the propagation of the new cult and we who can look

back with impartiality cannot but admire his great zeal and single-minded devotion.

HIS PILGRIMAGES AND WANDERINGS.

The next six years of Chaitanya's life were spent in pilgrimages to Orissa, Southern India and Brindaban and in the preaching of the new cult in several parts thereof. The first year was spent at Puri, the city of the temple of Jagannath, in Orissa, which was soon destined to become the headquarters of Chaitanya and his followers. Chaitanya's first visit to Puri is characterised by a remarkable outburst of ecstasy and devotion. For some time after his arrival, he *spent his days in performing his devotion at the temple*. He and his disciples did not at first attract much notice: but soon Chaitanya was brought into contact with the learned Bhattacharya, Sarbabhauma, a great scholar and the minister of the Orissan king, Pratap Rudra, of the Gajapathi dynasty. The conversion of Sarbabhauma to the Vaishnavite faith by Chaitanya is the first great incident in the new life. Sarbabhauma was a great Vedantic scholar, proud of his learning and his Adwaita philosophy. He at first proposed to teach Chaitanya, monk as he was, the principles of the Adwaita faith. Chaitanya

humbly listened to him for many days; the exposition ended, Chaitanya took up the Advaitin's arguments and, criticising them one by one, established the superiority of the Vaishnavite doctrines and their consonance with the words of the scriptures. Sarbabhauma was convinced and adopted the new faith with exceeding ecstasy and admiration. Chaitanya's famous address to Sarbhauma is quoted in a latter part of this sketch. It is sufficient here to notice the conversion of Sarbabhauma who, adopting Chaitanya's faith, praised him saying: "It was a high work to Thee to save the world, in comparison with the wonderful power Thou has manifested in converting me. Logic had made me hard like an ingot of iron. Thou hast melted me. Oh Thy wondrous might!"

After staying for some time more at Puri, Chaitanya started for the South. His pilgrimage, though undertaken with a view to visit the holy places, was also marked by missionary activity. He preached the new religion wherever he went and his preachings met with success and popular enthusiasm. "The people marvelled as they gazed at His golden hue, His crimson robe, and His tears of delight, His tremour and His perspiration, which set off His beauty. All who

came to see forgot their homes and stayed to join in the dance and song of Shri Krishna Gopal ; men and women, old and young, all were swept away by the tide of spiritual love." It was in the early part of this journey that a beautiful incident occurred which is thus described by the biographer of Chaitanya.

HEALING THE LEPER BASUDEV.

A high-minded Brahmin named Basudev was covered with leprosy ; but, as the maggots dropped from his rotting limbs, he used to pick them up and restore them to their places. At night he heard of Chaitanya's arrival and next morning went to Kurma's house to see Him ; on hearing that the Master was gone, he fell down in a faint and lamented in many ways. Just then the Master returned, *embraced him*, and lo ! the leprosy as well as grief was gone at the touch and his body became sound and beautiful ! He marvelled at the Master's grace and clasped His Feet and praised Him by repeating the following verse from the *Bhagabat* (Rukmini's message to Krishna sent by the mouth of a Brahmin—X, xxxi 14.) Long did he thank the Master, saying " Listen, Gracious One ! No man has Your virtue. *Even wretches fled from me at the stench of my body. But*

Thou, supreme lord, hast touched me ! Better for me my former state of misery, because henceforth my heart will swell with pride." The Master soothed him 'No, you will not be puffed up. Ever take Krishna's name and save men by teaching them about Krishna. Soon will Krishna accept you.'

At Vidyanagar (modern Rajamahundri, Godavari District), Chaitanya met Ramananda Ray the minister of the Orissa King and a learned Vaishnava scholar and mystic. Long did Ramananda Ray and Chaitanya discourse on the secrets of the Vaishnavite faith and the mystic joy of Krishna-worship. One long chapter, full of beautiful quotations from the Bhagabat, is devoted by the biographer to this discourse. Chaitanya then left Vidyanagar and wended his way to the Southernmost places of pilgrimage. He visited Tirupati Hills, Conjevaram and at last reached Srirangam on the banks of the Kauveri. There he stayed for four months in the house of a Vaishnava Brahmin by name Venkata Bhatta who treated the Master with great respect. At his request, Chaitanya stayed with him for four months, "passing the time happily in talking about Krishna with the Bhatta. Daily, he bathed

in the Kauveri, visited Sriranga and danced in ecstasy." From Srirangam, he went to Madura (Southern Mathura), Setubhand, Cape Comorin and then, passing along the Western coast, reached Udipi, the sacred city of the Madhwachari Vaishnavas. Here Chaitanya seems to have held disputations with learned Vaishnavas. Travelling then into Maharashtra, he visited Pandharpur, Nasik, the valleys of the Tapti and the Narmada. During his travels through the Maratha country, Chaitanya seems to have come upon the rich-wrought Sanskrit poem on Krishna—entitled *Krishna-Karnamrita*—for the first time, had a copy made of it and took it with him as a treasure. Turning east, he returned to Vidyanagar and thence reached Puri.

APPOINTMENT OF NITYANAND AND ADWAITACHARYA.

The next two years were spent by Chaitanya at Puri where pilgrims and disciples came to visit him during the season of the Jagannath festivals. The increasing numbers of converts and disciples and the necessity of inculcating in them the great truths of the new religion made some organisation essential. Chaitanya seems to have long thought over it and so, calling to his side his two great

friends and followers—Nityananda and Adwaita-charya—he said to them “Teach the lesson of faith in Krishna *to all men, down to the Chandals.*” To Nityanand, he added: “Go to Bengal. Freely proclaim the gospel of devotion and love. Ramdas, Galadhar and some others will assist you. Now and then I shall be with you and, standing unseen, shall witness your dancing.” Adwaita-charya, it may be remembered, was an elderly *bhaktha* who had been converted to the Krishna-faith by Madhav Puri himself. He was a Barendra Brahmin of Shantipur where a large number of his descendants are still living. Nityanand was a Brahmin of the Rarhiya clan, a native of the district of Birbhum and seems to have been a Nimvat Vaishnava of the school of Jayadev who had his head-quarters in Kenduli in the same district. Nityanand, though he does not seem to have been much of an ascetic and preacher as Chaitanya was, was yet full of a deep missionary enthusiasm, and converted to the new cult large numbers of men as well as women. The descendants of these apostles have to-day become powerful Gosains and masters of rich establishments, with princely incomes and crowds of adoring disciples; the purely religious character and work

of the early apostles themselves however cannot be doubted.

CHAITANYA'S VISIT TO BENARES AND BRINDABAN.

Chaitanya was now entering into the fifth year of his monkhood. A visit to Brindaban and the Jumna, the classic scenes of Krishna-*lila*, had long been the dream of Chaitanya's heart. He therefore, now, resolved to visit them before he could finally settle at Puri. Spite of the protests of his friends and disciples who were unwilling to part with him, Chaitanya started on his pilgrimage alone. Their importunities, however, made him accept one *sishtya* to travel with him. The journey to Brindaban, spite of its hardships, was to Chaitanya one long journey of devotion and ecstasy. His soul was filled with delight as he roamed through the wooded valleys and the bright river-swept plains of Central India. He embraced the very trees and animals in a fervour of religious ecstasy. At Brindaban itself, it was one long rapture. He bathed in the several sacred pools, worshipped at the hill and the shrines, continuously sang, danced and prayed. His devout longings satisfied, he at last returned to Puri by way of Benares.

During the return journey occurred an interest-

ing incident which is described with some detail by the biographer of Chaitanya. Chaitanya, while wandering in the woods with his few attendants, suddenly fell into a religious swoon. There at the same time came upon the scene some Pathan soldiers who took the attendants for some thieves and Chaitanya himself as their victim. They, therefore, proceeded to lay hold of the supposed thieves and bind them. Chaitanya, recovering from his swoon, interposed and explained the situation. The Muslims were satisfied. One of them, "a grave man clad in black and called a Pir" was touched by the sight of the fair Hindu monk and entered into a religious discussion with him. "He propounded monotheism and one common God on the basis of his holy book (the Quran.) But the Master refuted all his propositions by arguments based on the Muslim scripture, till the man was silenced. The Master continued, 'your scripture establishes one common God (in the beginning) and refuting that theory, sets up in the end a particular God who is full of all powers, dark of hue, the perfect spirit, the soul of all . . . the most excellent, adorable by all, the first cause of everything. . . . The highest beatitude comes only from serving

His feet. After first insisting on work, knowledge, and mental abstraction, these are then set aside and the service of God is laid down as the final duty.....' The Muslim replied 'True are your words.....The abstract God is discussed by theologians. Nobody thinks of adoring the incarnate God.....Much have I read but cannot ascertain the *sadhya* and *sadhan* from the Muslim scriptures.....Tell me graciously what are *sadhya* and *sadhan*.' So saying he fell at the master's feet." The Muslim was converted and chanted the name of Krishna. Chaitanya renamed him '*Ramdas*.' All the other Pathans, too, turned Vaishnavas and the contemporary biographer says that they "were all famous as the *Pathan Vaishnavas*."*

Another incident more important in the life of Chaitanya as a preacher occurred in this journey. It was the meeting of Chaitanya with the two brothers, Sanatan and Rup and his discourse to them on the doctrines of Vaishnavism and Krishna-worship. They were two brothers descended from a prince of Karnata who had settled in Bengal and whose descendants had become

* Krishna Das's *Life of Chaitanya* Translated by Prof. Jadunath Sarkar.

completely Bengalised. They were at first serving in high offices under the Mahomedan Governor of Bengal but, soon, moved by the new Vaishnavite impulses, deserted their posts and fled to the groves of Brindaban. They met Chaitanya in his pilgrimage and sat at his feet and learnt the doctrines of the new philosophy and religion. Chaitanya's discourses to these two men, so fully preserved to us by his Vaishnavite biographer, are the most profound and beautiful discourses of Chaitanya. Taught the new religion, the two brothers went to Brindaban and there founded a great Vaishnavite mission of which the fruits are still extant.

RETURN TO PURI.

His wanderings over, Chaitanya returned to Puri, and the remaining eighteen years of his life were spent in the holy city in the company of his disciples and friends. Few events are recorded in the story of this period of his life: it was all spent in prayer and worship and acts of piety and love. There is, however, a "daily beauty" in this life which still shines on us from the pages of the mediæval biography.

HIS DAILY LIFE.

Chaitanya woke with the morning and went

along with one or other of his disciples to the sea and bathed in its waters. From the sea-shore, his steps were directed to the temple of Jagannath and there he stood and prayed rapt in adoration long before the stream of pilgrims and daily worshippers began to pour in. Hours passed on but Chaitanya knew them not, till some friend or disciple reminded him that the noon was approaching. He then returned to his residence. If anybody, householder or *bhaktha*, had invited him for dinner, he went to his house and dined; but if the day was not filled with an invitation, he and his disciples ate the temple-*prasad* which the *paricha* (priest) brought to them. Often Chaitanya distributed the *prasad* to his disciples by his own hand, who received their portions with devout chantings of Hari's name. Chaitanya himself would then dine and, after a little rest, which the heat of the Indian climate makes necessary, he sat up to discourse to friend or foe, the greatness of the Vaishnavite faith, the sweetness of Krishna or the joys of Divine Love. Memorable were these discourses: his fair face, his sparkling eyes, his musical voice and eloquence held bound the hearts of his listeners as he poured forth his rapturous discourse rich with stirring verses from

the *Bhagabat*, or the aphorisms of Vyasa or the great utterances of the Upanishads.

Discourses and temple-worship apart, Chaitanya and his disciples often engaged in congregational worship by means of what are called *bhajans* and *sankirtans*. Gathered together on the seashore or among the trees of the Gundi-cha garden or within the cloisters of the Jagannath shrine, these men often danced and sang to the accompaniment of music. Their favourite songs were the verses from *Bhagabat* or the verses of their own native poets describing the beauty of Krishna or His Mercies or Radha's love. Often these men, before whom kings themselves bowed, in the madness of their adoration took on themselves the duty of temple-servants, went and washed the temple floor, and dragged the car. We, moderns, may not perhaps sympathise with or admire these religious exercises—the tireless exertion in *bhajan* and *sankirtan*, the physical acts of washing the image or dragging the car and the like: but few of us can fail to be struck with these saints' ecstatic piety, their overflowing love, and, above all, that spiritual comradeship and service that animated them all. It should be remembered that in this band were

gathered together many—princes and mendicants, scholars and low-born men. From the learned Bhattacharya and the King Pratap Rudra to the temple-*paricha* and “untouchable” Haridas Thakur—all were here living in sweet comradeship and love.

CHAITANYA'S SELF-SACRIFICE AND HUMANITY.

Nothing is more beautifully brought out in the life of Chaitanya than his great spirit of self-sacrifice and humanity. At the very time of his career, when he was well on the road to worldly prosperity and fame, he suddenly renounced them all at the call of a higher life. Possessed of all the Sanskrit learning of the age, gifted with a keen and powerful intellect, he might have become the master of a rich *tol*, taking gifts from princes and landlords. Or he might, like some of his compatriots, have even risen to be the minister of some king, dictating law and religion to his subjects. But Chaitanya gave it all up, and, with a self-sacrifice, as great as it is remarkable, wandered about dressed in the mendicant's quilt preaching of Love and Divine Service. Associating with all—the lowly, the outcaste and the poor—he ate, sang and prayed with them, he served them with his body and mind, consoling and edifying.

them by his discourses. Never since Buddha's death has any, more self-sacrificing, more full of love for human kind, trodden the soil of India.

HIS DEATH.

As years rolled on, Chaitanya's religious ecstasy seems to have grown on him to too great a degree. He had repeated fits of religious transport and ecstasy in which he acted in utter disregard of his own life—once leaping into the blue ocean, at another time battering his face against the stone walls of the temple. “At last in June-July 1533, his physical frame broke down under such prolonged mental convulsion and self-inflicted torments and he passed away under circumstances over which the piety of his biographers has drawn the veil of mystery.”*

CHAITANYA'S RELIGION AND UTTERANCES.

Among all the great mediæval reformers, Chaitanya stands unrivalled for his full-hearted adoption, and clear and emphatic exposition, of the principles of the new Vaishnavite creed. There is a tradition that Chaitanya composed a commentary on Vyasa's *Sūtras*; but the commentary is not extant. His eloquent discourses,

* Krishna Das's *Life of Chaitanya-Introduction*.

however, survive in which the special doctrines of the Vaishnavite creed—of a God with all *gunas*, of the distinction of soul from God, of a loving and joyous worship—are taught with great force and poetry. Full of his own deep personal mysticism, fired with the poetry of the *Bhagabat* and the Krishna-literature, these discourses are not mere expositions to be set aside by side with the classic commentaries of the South Indian *acharyas*, but in themselves profound and stirring revelations of the Vaishnavite religion. The following, taken from Chaitanya's address to the learned scholar Sarbhabhauma, contains a masterly resume of the Vaishnavite doctrines:—

THE VAISHNAVITE CREED.

The *Vēdas* and the *Puranas* tell us how to discern Brahma. That Brahma is (only another name for) God in His Totality. The Supreme Being is full of all powers, and yet you describe Him as formless? The *shrutis* that speak of Him as abstract (*nir-bishesha*), exclude the natural and set up the unnatural.

From Brahma originates the Universe, it lives in Brahma, and it is merged again in the same Brahma. The three attributes of God are that He is the three cases—Ablative, Instrumental and Locative (in relation to the universe). These three qualities particularise God. When He desired to be many, He looked at (employed) His 'natural power.' The physical mind and eye could not have then existed. Therefore the Immaterial Brahma had an eye to see and a mind to will with. The term 'Brahma' means the 'Perfect Supreme Being' (*Bhagaban*) and the scriptures affirm that Krishna is the Supre-

me Being. The meaning of the Vedas is too deep for human understanding, the Puranas make their sense clear.

Shruti itself denies to Brahma material hands and feet, and yet it says that God 'moves swiftly' and 'receives everything'! Therefore, *Shruti* asserts Brahma to be particular (*sa-biseshā*). It is only a fanciful interpretation—as opposed to a direct one—that speaks of Brahma as abstract (*nir-biseshā*). *How do you call that God formless who has the six qualities, and is supremely blissful?* You conclude Him to be powerless, who has the three natural powers, as is evident from the *Vishnu Purana*,

God's nature consists of *sat*, *chit* and *ananda*. The *chit* power assumes three different forms in three aspects: it becomes *hladini* from the *ananda* aspect; it becomes *sandhini* in the *sat* aspect and *sambitā* (known as 'knowledge of Krishna') in the *chit* aspect. The *chit* power is God's very essence (or inner nature); the life power (*jīva-sakti*) appertains to Him only occasionally; *māyā* is entirely outside Him (i.e. affects creation only). *But all these three offer devotion in the form of love.* The Lord's six powers are only manifestations of the *chit* power. And yet you have the presumption to deny such a power? God and creation differ as the master and slave of illusion respectively, and yet you affirm that creation is identical with the Creator! In the *Gita*, creation is recognised as a force exerted by God, and yet you make such creation one with God! See the *Gita*, vii 4 the words of Shri Krishna to Arjuna:—

'Earth, water, fire, air, ether, mind, self and self-consciousness—these eight powers (or natures) have emanated from me.

'Valiant hero! the eight natures about which I have already spoken to you, are inferior. Beyond them I have a higher, or living 'nature' which upholds this universe.'

God's form is composed of *sat*, *chit* and *ananda*: and yet you assert that form to be a corruption of the

'*satwa* quality! He is a wretch who denies form to God; touch not, behold not that slave of Death. The Buddhists are atheists from not respecting the *Vedas*. Atheism in a believer of the *Vedas* is a worse heresy than Buddhism. Vyasa composed the aphorisms for the salvation of men, but the interpretation of these aphorisms by the 'school of illusion' (*mayabadi*) is the cause of perdition.

Vyasa's aphorisms hold the 'theory of effect' (*Parinama*.) God is an incomprehensible power, but He is manifested as creation. The philosopher's stone produces gold without undergoing any change in itself; similarly God takes the form of creation without suffering any corruption. Objecting to this aphorism as an error of Vyasa, you have set up the theory of *bibarta* by a fanciful interpretation of it. Error consists in a creature imagining, 'I am one with the creator.' But creation is not unreal, it is only perishable. The great word *Pranaba* is the self of God; from that *Pranaba* all the *Vedas* have sprung in this world. The words 'Thou art That' (*tat-tvam-asi*) applied to creation are only fractional (*praveshika*), but you, without minding the *Pranaba*, call these words the supreme truth

A LOVING GOD.

In all this wide and rapturous vision of God as One full of all Attributes and supremely Blissful, there was one aspect—the Love-Aspect of God—which appealed to Chaitanya most, even as it did to the other mystics of this period, especially the Hindi poet, Kabir. God is to them not merely the supremely Beautiful, the Embodiment of all Power and Life, but the One Great Love that pervades the world. Chaitanya often speaks of

Krishna as the God "at whose adoration the formula recited is Love, the offering presented is the seed of Love." Krishna "is the source of Perfect Bliss; in comparison with Him, spiritual delight is as grass." Elsewhere in a more mystic and beautiful strain, he describes Krishna thus: "*He is the All-Attractor, the All-Rejoicer, the source of High Rasa, making men forget everything for His own Form; the aroma of whom makes men give up the quest of enjoyment, success, mukti and pleasure. In this adoration, there is no shastraic reasoning, no solution of theological problems, because in His Nature sweetness predominates.*" The same doctrine is somewhat theologically expressed in the following passage: "What delights Krishna is named the *ahladini* power by which He enjoys delight. *Krishna is Himself Delight and yet He tastes delight. Hladini* has been created to give enjoyment to the Faithful. The essence of *hladini* is named *prema* (love). The emotion of *prema* is filled with the emotions of *ananda* and *chit*. The supreme emotion (*mahabhava*) is the quintessence of *prema*. The lady Radha is the personation of that supreme emotion (vide the *Brahma Samhita* V. 33)."

Taking Kabir's songs, we find,

All things are created by the Om ;
 The Love-Form is His Body.
 His Form is infinite and fathomless, He dances in rapture and waves of form arise from His Dance.
 The body and the mind cannot contain themselves, when they are touched by His great joy.
 He is immersed in all consciousness, all joys and all sorrows ;
 He has no beginning and no end.
He holds all within His Bliss.

Or inspired by the same imagery of Krishna,
 The flute of the Infinite is played without ceasing and its sound is love.
 When love renounces all limits, it reaches truth.
 How widely the fragrance spreads! It has no end, nothing stands in its way.
 The form of this melody is bright like a million suns incomparably sounds the *vina*, the *vina* of the notes of truth.

In another song, we find : " Held by the cords of love, the swing of the ocean of joy sways to and fro and a mighty sound breaks forth in song." " Kabir," as has been said, " was essentially a poet and musician : rhythm and harmony were to him the garments of beauty and truth. Creation, he says again and again, is full of music : it is music. At the heart of the universe, ' white music is blossoming.' Everywhere, Kabir discerns " the unstruck music of the Infinite." Chaitanya is, however, essentially a " lover." To him, the absolute is the ' source of high *rasa* '—it is *rasa*. *Rasa* is a word which can at best be translated

into pleasure, delight, deliciousness, sweetness. God is then the supreme pleasure, the supreme delight or sweetness.

DEVOTION OR BHAKTHI.

Such a God who is all Love and Joy can be worshipped only in love—such Supreme *Rasa* can be tasted only by a heart full of longing and devotion. All the apparatus of religion—fast and ceremony and observance—are useless unless they lead to this love. Many are the eloquent passages wherein Chaitanya describes the characteristics of this *prem rasa* or love of God. “When passion (*rati*) in Krishna is deepened, it is called *prema* (love), the permanent form of *bhakti* in Krishna. It has two aspects. If any man has the grace to feel *shraddha* (faith), he consorts with pious men, from which companionship result the hearing and chanting of Krishna’s name. From the attainment of *bhakti* all his troubles are removed; and as a consequence, his faith becomes constant which gives him a taste for listening and hymning of Krishna’s name. From taste (*ruchi*) comes strong inclination (*asakti*) which gives birth to the sprout of passion for Krishna in the soul. When their emotion is deepened, it takes the name of love (*prema*). That love is the ultimate fruit, the

source of every bliss. The man in whose heart this emotion sprouts up is marked by the many qualities named in the *Shastras*. No earthly affliction can disturb his mind. Such a man never wastes his time without communing with Krishna. He never fears attack by enjoyment, material success or the objects of sensual gratification. Even the noblest *bhaktā* considers himself as lowly and firmly believes that Krishna will take pity on him. *He is ever expectant, ever passionately longing.*" Such love or devotion, however, is not fraught with any reward. "As wealth gives pleasure and drives away sorrow of itself, so *bhakti* kindles love of Krishna, and when love is turned to Krishna, man is freed from bondage to the world. The fruit of love is not riches, or the cessation of re-birth, *but its chief object is the enjoyment of the beatitude of loving.*"

SEVERAL FORMS OF BHAKTHI.

It is here in the description of this ecstatic love that we meet with those famous categories derived partly from Hindu Theology and partly from Hindu Poetics. They have been much misunderstood in some quarters and have even been the object of criticism by some. These categories are at best similes, likening the various forms or

moods of man's love for God to the human loves of the comrade, the father and the lover. The prevailing principle of them all is a faith and love such as animate the human relations described. Suggested by the rich mythology of the *Bhagabat* and inspired also by the passionate poetry of Jayadeva, Vidyapathi and the other great Vaishnava poets, these categories are not without value or interest. Beneath these seemingly theological formulas is the warmly human and direct apprehension of God as the Supreme Object of Love, as the soul's comrade, friend and bridegroom. We give below the passage :—

The *shanta rasa* consists in recognising the true nature of Krishna and fixing the mind on Him only. Krishna has himself said "Devoting the mind exclusively to me is the virtue of *Shama*" (*Bhagabat XI xxx 33*). It is the duty of a *shanta* votary to give up thirst for everything except Krishna; hence a *shanta* and a *bhaktha* of Krishna are identical terms. Krishna's devotee regards heaven and even salvation as no better than hell (*Bhagabat VI xvii 23*). Devotion to Krishna and conquest of desire are the two marks of a *shanta bhaktha*. All the five kinds of *bhakthas* are necessarily marked by these qualities, just as sound, the attribute of the sky, is possessed by the other four elements also. A *shanta* votary's attachment to Krishna is like an odourless flower; he has only acquired a true sense of God's nature, as the Supreme spirit and Divinity. The *dasya* mood better develops the cognition of Krishna as the Lord of full powers.

A *das bhaktha* constantly gratifies Krishna by serving him with a sense of His divinity, honour and great

glorification: *dasya rasa* has the merit of *shanta rasa* plus service i. e. it has two merits.

The *sakhya rasa* possesses those two merits plus absolute trust in Krishna. In *dasya*, Krishna's service is marked by honour and glorification; in *sakhya* by reliance. A *sakhya bhakta* sits on Krishna's back or carries Him on his shoulders or has a mock fight with Him; he serves Krishna and at times makes Krishna serve him! The chief characteristic of the *sakhya rasa* is free comradeship without any feeling of respect or awe. So this *rasa* has three qualities; in it Krishna is loved more ardently, as He is held equal to the *bhakta's* self; hence this *rasa* captivates the good.

In the *ratsalya rasa* there are the above three qualities plus tenderness which in its excess leads to chiding and chastisement. Such a devotee regards himself as the patron and Krishna as the *protégé*; his service takes the form of paternal care. This *rasa* has therefore four qualities and is like nectar. . . .

In the *madhur rasa* all the above four qualities are present in a heightened form, and in addition to them the votary serves Krishna as a *lover* offering Him his or her own person. Here five qualities are present. All the four emotions find their synthesis in the *madhur*, just as in the case of the five elements (sky, air, light, water and earth) the attributes of the first four are all united in the fifth. Hence is the *madhur rasa* of wondrous deliciousness. This emotion has been fully described. Reflect how to spread it. While meditating, Krishna will illuminate your heart. Through Krishna's grace even an ignorant man reaches the furthest shore of the emotions.

It is the last—the *Madhurya* love—as embodied in the passionate love of Radha and Krishna that deserves notice. This, according to the Vaishnava mystics, is the highest mood of *bhakti*, implying as it does all the great elements of true God-love—faith, absolute trust, service and the

abandonment of all notions of self. There is no doubt that the language of these mystics is purely allegorical and illustrative, and that here there is no idealisation of carnal emotions. But still it may be worth while to look at other parts of the faith of these mystics to know their meaning. In a beautiful passage where Chaitanya describes the love of Krishna in terms of a parable, he says :—

In roving through the universe, lucky is the man who gets the seed of the creeper of faith (*bhakti*) through the grace of his *guru* and Krishna. He sows the seed like a gardener, waters it with the hearing and chanting of the Holy Name. As the creeper grows, it pierces through the universe, passes beyond the *Biraja Brahma* world to the *Paradyom*, and above that, to the heavenly Brindaban where it creeps up the wishing-tree of Krishna's feet, spreads and bears fruit in the form of love (*prema*) . . . *If any sin against Vaishnavism is done, it uproots or tears the creeper like a wild elephant, its leaves wither.* Then the gardener on earth carefully covers it, to save it from the elephant of sin. *But if parasites, like love of enjoyment or salvation and countless others—or forbidden practices, like rubbish—slaughter of living beings, thirst of gain or fame—adhere to the creeper, then these parasites flourish from the watering, while the main creeper's growth is arrested. Cut off the parasites first; then only will the main branch reach the heavenly Brindaban.* When the mature fruit of love drops down, the gardener tastes it and proceeding up the creeper, he reaches the wishing-tree. There in Vishnu's Heaven, he tends the wishing-tree and blissfully tastes the juice of the fruit of love. That is the highest fruit, the supreme human bliss in comparison with which the four human attainments are

as straw. . . . From pure faith is born love. Therefore I tell you of the signs of pure faith. Leaving all other desires, worship of others, knowledge and work, devote all your organs to the cultivation of Krishna. This is pure faith, the source of love. Its signs are described in the *Narada Pancharatna* and the *Bhagabât*.

Love, thus we see, cannot grow in a mind addicted to pleasure or to enjoyment of the senses nor in one tainted by cruelty or sin. *Bhakti* is the fruit of minds, made pure by piety, self-abnegation and freedom from sin. As an Indian critic says, commenting on a Vaishnava poet whose verses were often sung by Chaitanya himself, "In ecstasy, man is beside himself: that this momentary escape from 'himself' is the greatest gift life offers, is a promise, as it were, a foretaste, of Release, warranting us that *Nirvana* is something more than annihilation. At the same time, be it well understood that such ecstasies are not rewarded to those who are followers of Pleasure nor to those that cling to self-will. In Vaishnava literature, this is again and again emphasised. It is not till the ear ceases to hear the outside world that it is open to the music, in the heart—the flute of Krishna." The same critic, speaking of the Radha-Krishna imagery observes: "It must be remembered that the

Krishna-*Lila* is not a historical record (as Nilkantha remarks 'the narration is not the real point'). His *Lila* in Brindaban is eternal and Brindaban is the heart of man. We are thus concerned with ideas and symbols, and not with history. The most that an objector could then adduce would be to suggest that the symbolism may be unwisely chosen and may be misunderstood. I should treat this objection with respect, and would agree that it may be valid from the standpoint of the objector. But I do not think that it is valid from the standpoint of the lover. I would not even say, let those who are able to take this passionate literature only in a carnal sense therefore ignore it; for if the worship of Loveliness is not Love, it is none the less a step on the way to Love. . . . If India is the classic country of lyrical poetry, this is because she is also the classic country of love. Love is certainly of more significance to the Indian consciousness than to the European, and the Western fear of voluptuousness is hardly known in the East. But just as beauty was never in India glorified as an end in itself, so romantic love never obtained there such hold and possession over life and art as it has in the

West. To put the same conclusion in other words, the Indian culture is nowhere corrupted by sentimentality. The reason of this is to be found, I think, in a widespread and deep-rooted consciousness of the principle of Impermanence."

HOW TO CULTIVATE BHAKTHI OR LOVE OF GOD.

There is a famous passago in which Chaitanya describes how love of God can be cultivated. It is at once supremely psychological and comprehensive. He speaks of two paths—one, by means of spiritual exercises and the other, not exercises but intuitive longing, a spontaneous devotion such as is found in gifted mystics. Study, singing, prayer, temple-worship, pilgrimage, self-restraint, active deeds of compassion and good-will—these form the spiritual exercises by which love and faith may be induced. Some of these—visiting holy places, temple-worship, etc,—work on the man's mind by association of thought; some such as scriptures and stories, by kindling man's knowledge and love. Others are exercises intended to train the mind and the heart. These are derived from the rules and ideals of the *Shastras*. The other kind of *bhakti* is a spontaneous one—a welling-forth of love out of the

depths of a mystical and devout nature. It is not the fruit of observances nor of artificial study and practice. Like that of a father to his child, like that of a comrade or lover, it is intense, personal, comes out of the depths of the heart. Such a bhaktha pays heed to no shastraic teaching: "he withdraws himself into his own mind, and there ever remains close to his object, the dearest Krishna, and serves Him incessantly." "Though he adores Krishna's feet rejecting shastraic rites, he feels nevertheless no temptation for forbidden sins." It may be observed that these both—exercises and intuitive longing—are not mutually exclusive. We give below the passage:—

The *sadhan* of *bhakti* is of two kinds: one following the ordinances of religion, the other following the heart's inclination.

The man without a natural desire for Krishna adores Him in obedience to the bidding of the Shastras; such *bhakti* is called regular (*baidhi*). "King, It is the duty of the man who seeks liberation to hear, to praise and to meditate on God, the Universal soul, the supremely beautiful, the liberator from bondage (*Bhagabat* III 1-5.)

The modes of cultivating *bhakti* are many; they are—taking refuge at the feet of the *guru*, initiation, service of the *guru*, inquiry into the true religion, following the path of saints,—renunciation of enjoyment out of love for Krishna, residence at holy places associated with Krishna, accepting alms no further than suffices for one's sustenance, fasting on the eleventh day of the

moon, reverence to foster-mothers, fig trees, kino, Brahmins and Vaishnavas, shunning from a distance all offences against adoration and the holy name,—avoiding the study and exposition of too many books and arts, looking at loss and gain as alike, control of grief and other passions, abstaining from abusing other gods and scriptures, never listening to scandal about Vishnu or Vaishnavas, giving no shock by thought or speech to any creature that lives—listening to obant, hymn-singing, keeping God in remembrance, worship, adoration in words, attendance on idols, dancing, singing, petitioning and prostration before Krishna's image, visiting shrines, reading scriptures, reciting the holy name, *sankirtan*, enjoying incense, garlands, and the *Maha-prasad*, witnessing *arati*, giving up whatever is dear to one's own self, meditation and serving Him.

Direct all your efforts to the service of Krishna, witness His Mercies, celebrate His Nativity and other days in the company of *bhakthas*. Ever fly to Him for refuge.

He, who adores Krishna's feet rejecting *Shastric* rites, feels nevertheless no temptation for forbidden sins. Even if he commits a sin, unwillingly, Krishna purifies him and he need not practise penance for it. (*Bhagavat* XI, v. 38).

Theological knowledge and monachism are not at all necessary means of cultivating bhakti; Krishna's society gives inoffensiveness and discipline (*Bhagavat* XI xx 31).

Hitherto I have held forth on the cultivation of *bhakti* in accordance with the *shastric* teaching. Now let me tell you, Sanatan, about *bhakti* in compliance with natural inclination... ..A passionate longing for the object of desire is the *swarup* characteristic of inclination (*raga*): absorption in the object of desire is its *latastha* featureThe nature of an 'inclination-led' *bhaktha* pays no heed to *shastric* reasoning. His two types are *external* and *internal*. In the external, the devotee through his

physical organs performs chant and listens to it, while in his mind he imagines himself to be identical with his ideal (such as any *sakhi* or cowherd mate of Krishna) Withdrawing himself into his own mind, such a votary ever remains close to his object, the dearest Krishna, and thus serves Him incessantly. In the path of inclination (*raga*) he takes Krishna as the object of his chief emotion, viz., as master, comrade, child or sweetheart (*Bhagavat* III. XXV. 35).

From the sprout of love (*prema*) issue two things *rati* (addiction) and *bhava* (emotion). These two conquer the Lord for us. Thus have I expounded *abhidya* from which we gain the treasure of love for Krishna.

Before concluding this section on Chaitanya's religion and utterances, we would quote the very noble passage wherein he describes the characteristics of the ideal Vaishnava :—

He is compassionate, spiteless, essentially true, saintly, innocent, charitable, gentle, pure, humble, a universal benefactor, tranquil, solely dependent on Krishna, free from desire, quiet, equable, a victor over the six passions (*shadguna*), temperate in diet, self-controlled, honouring others and yet not proud himself, grave, tender, friendly, learned, skilful and silent. The society of holy men is the root of the birth of devotion to Krishna. The principal limb that springs up from it is love of Krishna. The man who consorts with woman is one kind of sinner, while the man lacking in faith in Krishna belongs to another kind. Leaving these temptations and the religious system based on caste, the true Vaishnava helplessly takes refuge with Krishna..... Then comes resignation in. After taking refuge in Krishna, the votary gives himself up entirely to Krishna who then elevates him to His own nature.*

* The above passages are taken from Chaitanya's discourses in Krishna Das's *Life of Chaitanya*. Translated by Prof. Jadunath Sarkar.

CHAITANYA'S SECT.

While Chaitanya was spending the last years of his life at Puri, surrounded by his few friends of an ascetic disposition like himself, the new religion he had taught was spreading rapidly in Bengal and Central India through the instrumentality of his missionary disciples. The two men who laid the foundation of the sect in Bengal were Advaitacharya and Nityanand who, with Chaitanya, ere long came to be revered as the three Mahaprabhus of the new Church. Their descendants are still to be found in Bengal in possession of large religious establishments. Next to these Mahaprabhus came the six Gossains who appear to have all settled in Brindaban and Muttra. Their descendants are now found in those parts in possession of large mutts and temples. The foundation of the two great temples of Govind Deva and Madan Mohun is ascribed to their influence and celebrity. Rup, Sanatan and Jiv, their nephew, were the more celebrated of these six Gossains. A considerable portion of the literature of Chaitanya's sect owes its birth to the devout genius of these Gossains. Rup wrote *Vraja Vilasavarnana*, an account of Krishna's sports in Brindaban, a collection of hymns, called

Bakustavavali, and a drama entitled *Vidagdha Madhava*. Sanatan wrote *Haribakthivilas*, a treatise on the nature of God and Devotion, *Rasamrita sindhu*, a work of high authority on the same subject and *Bhakthamirta*, which contains the observances of the sect. The descendants of these Prabhus and Gossains are the leaders and high-priests of the Chaitanyite community. Though fallen off from the simple spiritual tradition of the early apostles, they still are men of some light and leading and their establishments are centres of popular culture and usefulness.

The strength of the community, however, lies chiefly in its lay members. The Chaitanyaitees are a most inoffensive and peaceful community. Their learning, their humane principles, their recognition of the rights of women, their insistence on piety and love in preference to fast and ceremony, make them one of the most influential North Indian sects. Some of the greatest characters that modern Bengal has produced have belonged to this church and its members still form a large and intelligent portion of the Bengali-speaking people.

THE
VAISHNAVITE REFORMERS OF INDIA
CRITICAL SKETCHES OF
THEIR LIVES AND WRITINGS

BY

T. RAJAGOPALA CHARIAR, M.A., B.L.

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